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ABSTRACT

Speaking and writing should be taught together as they both are concerned with the communication model that includes a speaker, a listener, and a subject and the way these elements affect each other. In speaking, it is clear that invention is a public process depending on the listener's or receiver's active participation in the creation of meaning. Speech activities can be useful for teaching the significance of audience in the process of writing. One helpful technique involves assigning an extemporaneous speech that requires careful preparation but that continues the invention process as the speaker responds to the audience. Group discussion can continue the process and can be used to teach an analytical scheme for problem solving that includes phrasing the problem, analyzing the problem, listing criteria to test a solution, suggesting possible solutions, and determining the best solution. Debate can be the next step in the process, as ideally advocacy follows inquiry. (TJ)

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What do you teach . . .?

The Role of Argument in Rhetorical Invention: An Integrated Skills Approach

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What do you teach . . .?

Not long ago at a dinner party I turned to a mathematician seated next to me and asked a question I thought related to his particular expertise. He turned on me with vehemence. "I'll bet you think I work with numbers!" he replied accusingly. I had to admit that was the case. Turns out he was a "probabilities man."

After recovering from my initial embarrassment, I took solace from the knowledge that speech communication teachers are not the only ones who suffer from image problems. How many times have I cringed upon hearing "Oh, you teach speech; I'll have to watch the way I talk." How many times have you been thought to be a walking handbook, expert on all matters of grammer and punctuation?

I suppose, after all, we in speech communication are interested in how people talk; our concern is with how people use language to solve problems--how they talk to themselves and to each other in private is essentially the province of interpersonal communication, how they work to solve public problems is the province of rhetoric, and the use of mass media to influence thought and action is yet another division of the field.

Our emphasis in the materials we will describe today is primarily (although not always exclusively) on public communication. One of my tasks in this discussion is to explain the title, which I suggested, "The Role of Argument in Rhetorical Invention: An Integrated Skills Approach." Jane is going to describe a model of argument based on Stephen Toulmin's work. The model is a kind of heuristic or invention scheme designed to help students discover and evaluate arguments. Annette will describe some of the activities we use in our integrated skills course.

In explaining the title, I'll start with the right side of the colon. Why an "integrated skills approach?" What can the field of speech communication offer the writing teacher? I first taught composition as a graduate assistant at the University of Illinois in the fifties. While I did not feel competent to teach the literary works included in the course, I felt better prepared than some of my colleagues to teach writing. In the late 60's James Moffett's Teaching the Universe of Discourse confirmed my own belief that writing and speaking should be taught together. Moffett's criticism of the traditional methods of teaching writing is by now almost

a cliché. He quotes Wendell Johnson, an old speech teacher:

"The second, and more grave, reason for their failure [teachers of writing] is that they appear to place emphasis on "Writing" rather than on writing-about-something-for-someone. You cannot write writing."[1]

Moffett develops this idea in his own words: "One failure of English teaching has been to consider only messages, or consider them before or without placing them in the whole context of the communication frame wherein the student can see the operation of all relations."[2] He describes the whole context of the communication frame; "a first person, a second person, and a third person; a speaker, a listener, and subject; informer, informed, and information; narrator, auditor, and story."[3] A more formal representation of these elements is explained in Ross Winterowd's introductory essay in Contemporary Rhetoric, which I have included on your handout. Virtually every current basic speech communication textbook--whatever its emphasis--begins with some version of the communication model.

The traditional emphasis on the message necessarily has meant an emphasis on product rather than process. Writing is a private individual activity in which the writer's concern is to get ideas into words on the

page; the speaker, on the other hand, is trying to create meaning in the minds of listeners. Thus in speaking the act of invention is--at least partially--a public process, and to a varying degree depending on the type of speech activity, it is a cooperative process. That is, the listener or receiver actively participates in the creation of meaning.

After writing the above paragraph, I discovered a passage by Richard Larson which describes this difference in the two activities. In a piece entitled "A Teacher of Writing Among Teachers of Speech," Professor Larson describes his participation in a conference of rhetoricians at Pheasant Run:

> Of more immediate consequence for the teacher of writing and literature is the conferee's recognition that inventing is not the work only of a speaker or writer (a "transmitter"), but of the listener or reader (the "receiver"), too. The listener in the transaction, the conferees argued, reinvents what he receives (and, in oral discourse, may compel the speaker-transmitter himself to reconceive, or reinvent, his utterance). How many of us who talk about writing have been concerned with the way readers reinvent, given their perspectives and their world views and their preferences among symbols, what others have written? We know, subconsciously, that reinvention happens; but usually we do not think about how or why or with what effects it happens.[4]

It is in examining the invention process and the significance of audience in that process that speech activities can be useful for teaching

students to use language more effectively. In June of 1977, I reversed Professor Larson's experience and became "a teacher of speech among teachers of writing" when I attended a two-week seminar on Current Theories of Teaching Composition at the University of Detroit. I listened to Professor Janice Lauer and other visiting lecturers talk about the current emphasis in teaching writing--call it invention, or the composing process, or pre-writing, or heuristics, or discovery procedures--whatever label you choose. It occurred to me that the public and communal nature of invention in oral discourse provides a way to talk about process and that I had been teaching heuristic procedures without really being aware of it.

One standard assignment in speech classes is the extemporaneous speech. Students are urged not to write out what they want to say word for word--"a speech is not an essay standing on its hind legs" we tell them. They are instructed to decide on a purpose--"How do you want your listeners to respond?" Then they are directed to outline what they want to say, including more supporting materials than they expect to use. The next step is to practice developing the outline, preferably with a live audience, so they can reconstruct their ideas for the class audience, adding or cutting

according to audience response. The extemporaneous presentation differs from impromptu speaking because it is carefully prepared in advance, but it does continue the invention process in the classroom as the speaker fills in the outline he or she has prepared and responds to audience questions about the material.

Group discussion is another standard activity in speech communication classrooms. I include it early in the integrated skills course because it promotes cooperation and unity among class members and because it introduces them to a heuristic model that serves as an organizing principle for the course. The logical progression from inquiry to advocacy in the problem-solution analysis forms the basis for a series of writing and speaking assignments.

One version of the analytical scheme used for problem solving group discussion is included on your handout; it is neither original or new, based as it is on John Dewey's classification of the steps in the reflective thinking process:

1. Awareness of problem, difficulty confusion, uncertainty
2. Definition of the precise nature of the problem
3. Discovery of possible solutions to the problem
4. Choice of best solution
5. Test of chosen solution.

These steps are translated into the procedure included on your handout:

1. Phrasing the problem
2. Analyzing the problem: What are the symptoms? Causes?
3. Listing the criteria to be used to test solution
4. Suggesting possible solutions: What are advantages and disadvantages of each
5. Determining best solution.

Students work as a group to frame questions, find materials, evaluate them and apply the information to the solution of their problem. They learn about evaluating information and distinguishing fact from inference. They present their results to the class audience.

Once students have become familiar with the scheme, they can use it to analyze audiences. Is the audience aware of the problem? How much time needs to be spent on directing audience attention to the difficulty? To defining? Is the audience ready to consider a particular solution? Are they considering several possibilities or are they ready to be moved to action--to put a particular policy to the test?[5]

Lest I sound disgustingly smug about the speech teacher's attempts to teach an invention procedure, let me hasten to add that it is as difficult to get students to focus on process in preparing oral assignments as it

is in written ones. Some will write out speeches and read them and some will go into the discussion group sure of the best solution from the beginning; just as they scribble down readymade clichés the night before a paper is due and call the result a composition. In both cases our problem is to persuade them that better procedures might yield better results.

I teach debate as the successor to discussion; ideally advocacy follows inquiry. Debate is a way to "test" a proposed solution. The stock issues in formal debate grow out of the problem-solution pattern: Is there a need for a change? What proposal, if adopted, will meet the need? Will the advantages of the proposed solution outweigh any disadvantages it may have? Information yielded by inquiry in discussion becomes evidence in the debate, and students' evaluation of sources becomes part of their support and refutation. The primary purpose of the debate unit is to develop students' ability to discover and test arguments. The use of the Toulmin model to teach this skill is Jane's topic.

What do we teach? I agree with Richard Larson: "Teachers of English and Speech Communication should be known, not as advocates of linguistic

and social conformity or as ringmasters directing academic exercises, but as investigators of the process by which people employ symbols to change each other (and themselves)."[6]

FOOTNOTES

[1]James Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968), p. 8.

[2]Ibid., p. 12.

[3]Ibid., p. 10.

[4]Richard L. Larson, "A Teacher of Writing Among Teachers of Speech," Western Speech, (Winter, 1972), p. 7.

[5]For a detailed discussion and list of questions see Bryant and Karl R. Wallace, Fundamentals of Public Speaking, 4th Ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1969), pp. 304-308.

[6]Larson, p. 8.